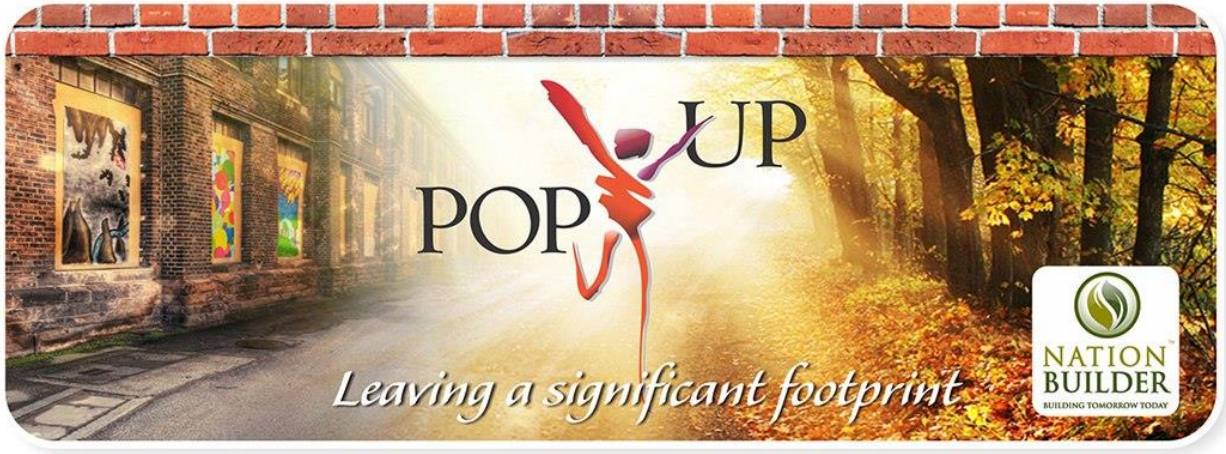
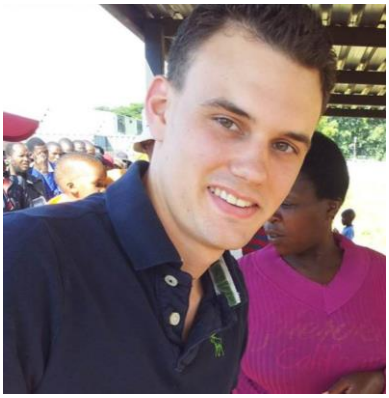
I am only one, but I am one!



"I am only one, but I am one.
I cannot do everything, but I can do something."
(Edward Everett Hale)



My name is Daniel Kroll (25) and I decided to go my own way after my graduation. A way into risk and uncertainty, to realize myself and to give something back from what I have experienced in my life. Starting with a safe environment, a good school and a decent education, to a good university degree. For us Germans mostly something self-evident, but unthinkable in some other countries. A reality in many areas in South Africa.

Therefore I went for a period of one year to work in an organization inAfrica, with the intention to make a difference in the lives of other people. The organization is called POPUP - People Upliftment Programme - in which I have established myself as a volunteer project manager and facilitator. POPUP itself is a skill and development center for underprivileged and disadvantaged people. For people who have no money, no hope, no education and no prospects in life. Most of their lifes is marked by negative events such as crime, rape, drug abuse and other tragic events. POPUP offers them the opportunity to get an education through training and accredited courses and helps them to find a purpose for their life and to give them hope and future visions. Since most participants (age varies between 18 and 45) have very little financials to provide for the basic needs, POPUP also offers free food supply, a clothing chamber, early childhood development and medical services.

After the first emotional experiences and impressions within the organization I wanted to "give something back" and make a significant difference in the lives of other people and I was convinced do this not only for the people in need, but also for some employees and friends I met there. In alignment to the slogan of the organization, "Leaving a Significant Footprint" I have accepted this challenge and pursued it every day again and again. I was involved in many projects and also led some of them, and I would like to describe the 3 most sustainable and effective ones in this record:

Going to Africa – Becoming an author...

Due to the expiring accreditation and lack of funds to buy accredited textbooks for the computer class, I wrote my own textbook. 210 pages later and after many nerve-wracking days and nights I finished it after 5 months processing time and submitted it to the South African government for accreditation. Some time later, the organization received the certificate for the accreditation of their computer course until 2017. Graduates of this course have a very high placement rate for jobs and POPUP got all the rights for this learner manual.

Fundraising – A goal, paired with persistence and patience pays off!

In the area of fundraising, I have gained a large and international IT company after 6 months of negotiations as a partner for POPUP. They bring enormous annual donation amounts and the company also organizes different Volunteer days on the ground of POPUP, such as “Volunteer Challenges” to value the people in need and to do maintenance and renovation work of buildings, the premises, facilities. These are only small parts of a huge partnership that has been established during the last 1 ½ years.

Soup Kitchen - Everyone has the right to get respect and appreciation!

The most exciting project, which was closes to my heart from the first day, was the soup kitchen. People from the township close by receive fresh soup and bread on a daily basis. Every single day, 200 Africans get served, including many women, mothers and children and for most of them it is their only meal of the day. Over the year, I took over the leadership of this soup kitchen and established a system so that all the people there are treated equally and each has a guarantee to get food, even if he or she is the last in line. Until that time, many of the Africans were afraid for their existence and starvation, so they started to fight for the food. Just the thought that people are so desperate because of getting food, a basic human need, and to fight for it, made me speechless and made me realize what kind of world we live in.

Because of the system and an orderly flow the risk for me and the staff decreased and I started to build up good conversations and relationships with the beneficaries of the soup kitchen and got insights into their lives. Insights and experiences that have often brought me to my emotional limit. But nevertheless, it has helped the people, because they have found someone who is listening to them and who treated them as normal people without any prejudice. All the people of the soup kitchen found a place in my heart and I wanted to leave them a sustainable project to express my appreciation towards them.

Due to safety reasons, the soup kitchen always takes place outside the property of the organization and the people had to sit on the dusty, dirty and partially littered floor, including the women and children. In my eyes this was an inhumane state and the people got shown again that they are worth nothing and have to live in the dirt. So I have designed a cemented place with roofing, conrete steel benches, a serving table and an area to line up and realized these plans with a building contractor. In addition, they have received a water tank, which all the people of the local townships can use 24 hours a day to get fresh water. This has been given the opportunity to many residents of this township to wash themselves properly and with clear and clean water for the first time after many years. The entire construction was completed on the day of my departure, back to Germany, so I still could launch the whole project by myself and was privileged to see infinitely happy faces. As a surprise and big thanks for the work, POPUP created a sign which has been attached to the soup

kitchen building. It was a very special and emotional moment for me, which I will always keep in remembrance. Should I get unexpected funding through this competition, parts of it will flow in the soup kitchen project, that the inhabitants of the townships will benefit from it.

Final thoughts as an inspiration for our first-world problems:

A beautiful country like South Africa, with many extreme problems and yet, the people live happier than most Germans. As a German we are not used to a controversy such as this and therefore, several mental issues and questions have passed my way in Africa:

• How can people live like this?

• How can I spend a year behind fences and living in the middle of crime?

• How can I handle the whole experience and the stories of people emotionally?

• Why can people still be so happy?

• Do I need to be ashamed, that I have so much in my life and that I am so privileged and still complain about so many things?

• Do I have to feel ashamed for my attitude?

Thoughts and questions where I could not find an answer right from the beginning. I felt alone and misunderstood, even though all the people were unusually friendly and open. The great response to this mental confusion was a word which has influenced my whole year:

Thankfulness!

Be grateful for everything you have and you may experience. Even difficult situations and challenges bring forth a positive and an educational message for the future. I do not have to be ashamed for what I have, but I must be ashamed if I wouldn't appreciate the things I have and if I wouldn't be grateful.

I highly recommend it to every reader and would like to put it on your heart, to look at the things that you have and to be grateful for it instead of looking at what others have and yourself not.

So often, it only takes a seed that must be sown. I used this opportunity to sow a tiny seed, a seed from which a flower has grown. This flower made things that seemed impossible and I have never thought about, possible… Contacts and Partners that were found and messages that were spread by word of mouth. It became a fire, as it has no one expected before, and for sure: Not me…

All of this is not about me at all… I just want to motivate every reader of this report, because **everyone** can do the same, when he or she goes his own way and pursues his goals with commitment and a positive attitude. **Everybody can leave a significant footprint**.